

# **DELAWARE RE-ENTRY EDUCATION TASK FORCE**

**November 17, 2014**

**9:30 a.m.**

**Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families**

**Multi-Purpose Facility, Building #9 (Conference Room 1)**

**1825 Faulkland Rd., Wilmington, DE 19805**

## **MEETING MINUTES**

### **Task Force members in attendance:**

Abdul-Malik Muhammad, Parkway Academy Schools

Ed Atwood, Justice of the Peace Court

Ashley Biden, Delaware Center for Justice

Nancy Dietz, Dept. of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families

Tyrone Jones, AstraZeneca

Kendall Massett, Delaware Charter Schools Network

The Honorable Jennifer Ranji (Chair), Dept. of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families

Erik Raser-Schramm, Citizen Representative

John Sadowski on behalf of The Honorable Mark T. Murphy, Dept. of Education

Laurisa Schutt, Teach for America Delaware

Kim Siegel on behalf of The Honorable Matthew Denn, Lieutenant Governor's Office

Henry Smith, Department of Health and Social Services

### **Others in attendance:**

Kit Lunger, Office of the Public Defender

Richard Morse, ACLU

Cara Sawyer, Dept. of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families

Kelly Schaffer, Dept. of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families (consultant)

Kevin Thompson, Director of Student Services at Caesar Rodney School District

### **1. Welcome and Introductions**

Secretary Ranji welcomed the group to the meeting and noted we will be starting the discussion on recommendations, as the Task Force report is due in six weeks. In some cases we can make recommendations for actions now, and in some cases we may recommend further exploration. We have a recommendations document to share with the group that pulls together a number of questions based on the topics we've discussed. It's not to suggest that we should or shouldn't adopt those listed or that we haven't missed others. We don't want this to be seen as

something written in stone, rather it is a conversation starter for what we might recommend.

Minutes from the October meeting were reviewed. Kit Lunger was at the last meeting and her name was missing from the attendance. The minutes were approved with the exception of adding Kit Lunger to the attendance record.

## **2. Report Outs**

Kelly Schaffer provided an update on progress to gather additional information about the 2012 cohort of students who left secure care. At the last meeting we reviewed data from a cohort of 66 students, half of whom did not have records in DELSIS after leaving YRS care. Their exit code in DELSIS indicated they transferred to a Delaware public school, however no record was opened afterwards. We learned from the Department of Education (DOE) that if there are no records after the last withdraw then the student did not re-enroll in a Delaware public school. We cannot assume they dropped out. They could have gone to a private school, out of state or somewhere else. Ms. Schaffer described that she learned from DOE that exit codes in DELSIS are subject to interpretation among districts and the code “005” which means transferred to a Delaware public school could mean that for one district, could mean expelled to another, or something else to others. DOE does not hold much stock in the exit code data for that reason.

Ms. Schaffer described how information is being reviewed from FACTS records. This follows up to Nancy Dietz’s suggestion at the last meeting that caseworker notes should describe a youth’s transition. Ms. Schaffer noted it takes time to review individual records and stated there will be a more comprehensive summary at the next meeting. She provided a few examples of what has been learned so far. One student’s record in DELSIS indicates he left Seaford High School and transferred to an out of state school. FACTS records show the youth’s probation and aftercare was transferred to Maryland where he now resides with his father. The youth has

pending charges in Delaware and Maryland and his educational status in Maryland is unknown. A second example is a student who left YRS care and DELSIS records showed he moved or transferred to another program. Upon review of FACTS records it was learned that the student went to a residential treatment program after leaving secure care. As of recent he is now back in the care of YRS. A third example is a student whose DELSIS status indicates he is currently enrolled at Moyer Academy. FACTS records align and describe that housing issues after leaving secure care contributed to him not re-enrolling for 7 months after he left YRS care. The record also indicates he tried to re-enroll in his traditional school sooner but was told it was too close to the end of the school year. Finally, examples were provided of a youth whose FACTS record indicate he had his GED prior to detention and another youth whose records indicate he is a high school graduate, though it is unclear when he graduated and from where.

John Sadowski asked about the student who left YRS and tried to return to his district and ended up at Moyer; he wondered about the timing of when he tried to re-enroll and to what district he was returning. Ms. Schaffer responded we have access to that information and can report back. Kendall Massett also responded that students should be able to re-enroll in their feeder district at any time of the year.

Secretary Ranji asked what the status is of being able to access transcripts online. Mr. Sadowski described that transcripts come from a master schedule. The Education Unit could create a master schedule and pull transcripts from YRS, but it wouldn't come from other districts. Districts are also unable to pull from other districts. Mr. Sadowski noted students should always have a hard copy of transcripts, and Ms. Porter mentioned at a previous meeting that they get good response from districts when obtaining records. eSchool is not equipped to sharing transcripts. Secretary Ranji stated that if the Education Unit could access the

information it would take the step out of having to request it.

A Task Force member asked if we could look at additional demographics for youth, such as race. Ms. Schaffer responded we could, as that data would be in DELSIS and FACTS.

### **3. Exploring Possible Task Force Recommendations**

A recommendations document was shared with the group for discussion. Secretary Ranji stated a need to think about what recommendations we want to make and how in depth we want to go. We also will consider if there are pieces that need more exploration and research beyond this Task Force report. Secretary Ranji described that the recommendations document is divided into broad categories – supports for re-entering traditional schools, course and credits transfer, improved systems and cross-sector collaboration and looking at a new type of school model.

Starting with transition supports, Secretary Ranji posed the question of how the transition process should be supported and enhanced to ensure successful re-entry of youth leaving secure care. One of the best practices we've heard about is having a transition specialist. This would be more of an advocacy role, somewhat different than the probation officer roles that are already in place. It is a supportive type of position. Then we could talk about what the role should be – for example, ensuring records are shared, aiding in the re-enrollment project, where the transition specialist should be housed, and finally, are there ways to strengthen the relationship between a student and the school to which they are returning.

A Task Force member asked if the Department's transition specialist within the Education Unit serves in that role. Nancy Dietz responded that the transition specialist does serve in that role, but she is the only one. Secretary Ranji stated it's not enough to do the hands on, individualized care the students need. Laurisa Schutt responded that Douglass School seems to have a process we might consider, as was learned at the site visit. They get everyone together

around the table for the student who is transitioning. Mr. Sadowski stated that is the alternative school model. When a district decides a student needs to go to an alternative school there is a planning meeting that takes place. When students go to YRS, the school and YRS need to be in constant contact. Kim Seigle stated that alternative schools are different than YRS because we don't always know which school the students are going back to. Ms. Massett referred to the student that Ms. Schaffer spoke about who had trouble re-enrolling. She questioned if families understand the process, and noted they may not be comfortable or have the ability to advocate for their child. It needs to be more than one person, perhaps someone who does everything that this role should be. The district of residence may not be the right fit for a student so there needs to be an advocate that can determine the right fit. Richard Morse stated it is important the person be at YRS, because they get complaints from kids where the district doesn't want them back. Someone working at the district level is not in the right position to be the advocate; some districts don't want the kids to come back. Mr. Malik Muhammad stated how we envision this is important. If it's someone in an advocacy role then that is limiting. An advocacy role cannot only foster collaboration. It also affects ability to do direct intervention with youth. He thinks districts would push back and say we don't need an advocate for the student, we need someone who can help do direct service in the home. This could be an advocate, but someone who also does the mentoring piece. Secretary Ranji stated we should think about what we want them to do and then think about what to call it. The position will connect dots, help with relationships, and make sure the kid knows where to go. To the extent they need to they will also advocate. It is someone who will help represent the child's interest in a collegial and collaborative way.

Kevin Thompson, Director of Student Services at Caesar Rodney introduced himself to the Task Force. He thanked the Task Force for taking on this issue as he sees these situations often.

He stated that sometimes the district gets a call from YRS that a student is coming back and the district hasn't had any interaction so far. Often the schools don't know what's been happening with the student. Mr. Thompson also stated he works with students who are placed out of state. The district tries to stay engaged on a monthly basis through check in meetings. For transcripts, the guidance counselors pull information from kids to help build a transcript. He suggested developing a mechanism to communicate with schools on a regular basis. When kids are in alternative placements they meet on a constant basis and get updates from them. He also noted that sometimes students do very well in a YRS setting, and the school starts to learn what the student needs right before they get back. He acknowledged the need for more time to prepare for the student and they want students to be successful. Secretary Ranji stated the idea of ongoing communication is another part of the recommendations. Sharing educational information is an important piece. Since Angie Porter is not at the meeting today, Secretary Ranji said the willingness of districts to have someone available on a regular basis will vary, and that is part of the challenge. This is a reason to say what we think should happen. Whether it's having a point person, or having a process to follow up; we need to build into our thinking that it's not going to look the same in all 19 districts and charter schools.

Ashley Biden asked if by the time a student leaves Ferris if they know where they're going. When a student is at Cleveland White they start the educational transition process. The guidance counselor and educational diagnostician at Ferris could know where they're going. Ms. Biden added she likes the idea of having students go to the school. There could be a buddy system in the schools where students could get linked up to someone who has a similar schedule. We could find a way to give credit to students who are paired up. It is then important is to hire additional staff to advocate and help the students. Secretary Ranji stated part of the question is

who should be at the table and when. Some of that has to do with setting up a process and some of it has to be making sure the right people show up. It also has to do with the reality that sometimes we don't know where the kids will reside until very close to when they leave. Some end up in DFS custody. For those that have a clear path, it's about having the diligence to be in touch.

Henry Smith stated he helps to support the adult system and has started to learn about how complex re-entry can be. Constructing the whole system needs some sort of convening mechanism. Someone needs to serve in the role of catalyst. He questioned what is the current structure. Secretary Ranji stated we did cover this at previous meetings; there are transition meetings and planning meetings before the youth leaves. It looks different in terms of who is there. The education transition planning is separate from the rest of the transition planning. We could think about recommending those things are joined together – compliance, mental health and education. We have probation officers and we are talking about adding additional transition specialists. We've also talked about mentoring relationships, and we have youth-based advocates in the budget for this year. It will only serve a few kids but we could learn about impact. Right now transition supports are not happening in a robust or consistent way.

Tyrone Jones responded that re-entry is the umbrella, and then we need to think about what are the important pieces and other supports. We should think about how to link and leverage resources, using education as the point of focus. Other points of re-entry may need to be built around the home. He stated he is in support of transition specialists within the context of successful re-entry into home, community and school in that order. Not knowing where the young person will reside is a big issue, and that then impacts the school they will go to. Then, determining what supports are in the community. Advocacy becomes easier by having the other

pieces in place. Pre-release planning should be 3 months out. If a student is at Cleveland White then home visits should take place during that time. Then the month prior to release you can solidify education plans.

Mr. Smith agreed and said we might also give consideration to a cultural dimension. When kids leave YRS there are certain court requirements they need to comply with. Sometimes there is an idea that there needs to be perfection. When kids don't fully comply then we have probation officers that pull them back in. If we don't give some consideration to adjusting that culture then we will have certain aspects of the system working against us. Mr. Jones agreed that they are already tagged. We need to have folks that understand the grassroots engagement. There are times when you'll need to engage them at 1am, because they may violate curfew. It is key that the person or persons understand the dynamics of the community. It starts there and transitions into the other structural settings. He stated sometimes we are not realistic with the youth. Secretary Ranji stated there are cases where people think probation officers are jumping too quick or not quick enough. If something bad happens then people want to know why they weren't brought in. Probation officers are in a place to have to try to figure out the real risk in terms of if a youth is off track or just not perfect. There are also the schools and neighbors and others who have heightened levels of sensitivity to what is going on there.

Mr. Muhammad stated it's the youth control complex, that there's an unspoken conspiracy to control youth. From informal relationships in the community and parents conspiring with agencies of the state. It's strong language, but he thinks what we might be advocating for is someone who is outside of that process who can help to restore relationships. A Task Force member responded it is also about mentoring and being there to support the youth. Mr. Muhammad stated a need to look at indigenous folks in the community for transition specialists.



If we want to see young people transition then we need to put men that have transitioned in front of them. We need to reimagine gentlemen who have come out of incarceration as potential mentors and specialists. They are the ones who will know where to find kids at 1am.

Ashley Biden noted they have two case managers at Delaware Center for Justice to follow students when they leave; both have been in the criminal justice system. One spent a significant amount of time in the system. They sometimes come in to work and say they got a call in the middle of the night. Secretary Ranji asked how long that work has been in place. Ms. Biden responded it started in April and 9 students have exited out. They are all gun court kids and they are placed in alternative schools. She noted they are also finding that basic needs are not met for these youth. They are living in poverty, not eating, and don't have electricity or beds. We are seeing the effects of poverty. Case managers connect with the kids. Many youth are dealing with issues of getting food on top of issues like getting to school, the case managers understand this. Mr. Jones responded that's why it's important to have someone who is capable of understanding that from a home, community, and school perspective. We have to understand the home component before school. It's about life coaching and how to re-establish life outside institutional walls. We need to deal with the basics. If a kid doesn't know where to eat, he's not going to focus on his education.

Mr. Smith described community health workers who understand all of the factors that need to be addressed related to disparities in health. He referenced training related to the topic. Mr. Thompson stated it might be helpful to put more of a process around the transition. One mechanism could be to have students re-enter on a 2-3 day per week basis. If a student's needs are not met, he won't care about school. When a student has contacts where they are placed then they could start transitioning and making those connections in the school. It would help the

school understand what their needs are and how to meet them (e.g. meals).

Mr. Sadowski stated that the conversation about mentoring has come up with other groups. He asked how we get more people to mentor and wondered if it is through working with universities. Mentorship is not a paid position. Secretary Ranji said mentoring comes up at every meeting. It is a need to get the right mentors, who have structure and understand what they're signing up for. There is also a need for a structured realistic way to get mentors who will be helpful for these kids.

Secretary Ranji said that when her and Ms. Dietz started talking about this issue two years ago they spoke about needing to have someone who will look at family structure and community structure. That's how the budget for community-based youth advocates came in. It is a small-scale program, but will give something to show as a proof point. If we can help meet basic needs and support families' self-sufficiency we will help get youth back on track. With regard to school, the youth advocates will have the ability to act as a mentor and be available 24/7. Youth advocates will have a caseload of four. This still doesn't get to the education piece in terms of knowing course and credit requirements. She suggested the position we're talking about might be similar to the youth advocate plus the education side. Secretary Ranji also acknowledged these questions are how we ended up with this Task Force. The education piece requires specialized work and connections. She suggested we talk about the broader aspect of the work. If all we talk about is education then it won't work. Perhaps we make a recommendation about tracking or adding to the community-based youth advocates program. We need to address the broader aspect but also specifically what the executive order called for, which is the education piece of the transition. This is where the education transition specialist fits in, as that person will know the nuances of the education system. They will also know what questions to ask and how

to advocate. Ms. Massett responded that it seems we've been talking about one person who will advocate for the child and acknowledged she also heard people saying there is potential to have partners. The youth advocate could do the family and community piece and then someone who is a partner could do the education piece. If youth see this as a partner effort then that alone will help them. Secretary Ranji stated we might decide that the youth advocate is enough, or not. We have to cover all of the pieces to see how it can be successful. It sounds like we want to add a recommendation more broadly related to the supports for family and community. That may be tied back to the youth advocate program. The Department has an RFP out that is closing soon for a community based youth advocate program and the Task Force can keep an eye on how that goes. A Task Force member stated we might define re-entry, and the resources necessary for building a successful re-entry process. Then we could discuss the addition of an educational transition specialist who is working with Ferris and districts with their sole responsibility being successful re-entry of youth back into the school. We will have to ensure this is built around home and community. Mentoring is a component and an opportunity to help the student progress, but they won't provide that intimate service related to education.

Ms. Dietz stated she thinks we are talking about leveraging supports and resources like we will do with the youth advocate program. Even with the best probation officer or specialist, without supports in the community that will fall apart. She also stated the Department needs to do a better job internally. When talking about YRS, we're often talking about the Education Unit, which is a different division. Internally we need to better define a process that starts early and involves students and families and transition meetings with the family and probation officer. Now we have to add in the education piece. The education side is invited to the table but the process is not as integrated as it could be. Secretary Ranji stated that is internal and we will also

need to loop in the educational aspects. Mr. Muhammad asked how many youth advocates will be funded in the new program and how many youth served. Secretary Ranji stated at any one time they would serve up to 4 youth. Ms. Dietz stated 20 students might be served over a year. It will also ensure it does not overlay with other supports in place. A Task Force member reflected that is an important point that the Education Unit is not part of YRS. Ms. Dietz stated they have had conversations about communication. The Education Unit provides services in all residential facilities, and YRS youth are just a part of those they serve.

Mr. Smith suggested we consider bringing someone in who can provide training for those working in communities. It's a special skill set, and not just those who have interest. A Task Force member responded that it's beyond having someone who has been a part of the system before. It involves knowing how to engage families and knowing when and what to report. There are many dynamics that need to be taken into consideration. Secretary Ranji stated when we talk about mentoring people don't necessarily understand how they will get pulled into significant challenging dynamics; people need to know how to manage and where to draw the line. Ms. Dietz will bring information to the next meeting on the youth advocate program.

Secretary Ranji said it sounds like we want to recommend more transition specialists as one part of the overarching umbrella for re-entry. Looking at 1.1.1. on the recommendation document provided, she asked if there is anything for the role that is concerning or missing. A Task Force member reflected he likes the term advocate. Ms. Biden asked if the Task Force should come up with an ideal process for what we want the process to look like from entry to exit. Secretary Ranji agreed. It would have been interesting to start with a clean slate and think about what it looks like. Maybe we can think about what that would look like at the next meeting or bring in something to consider. Secretary Ranji stated if people see other details to

add to the role of the specialist to let us know.

Secretary Ranji asked if people had other opinions about housing the person in the Department. Mr. Jones referred back to the Education Unit within the DSCYF. He stated he doesn't know how many people are focused strictly on kids in Ferris and returning to the community and what are their roles and responsibilities. That will help inform decisions related to recommendations #2 (course and credit records transfer). Under #2 we have Education Unit becoming a school district. He acknowledged he couldn't answer that because he doesn't know the depth of the Education Unit under the Department. Mr. Jones stated he doesn't understand the technology that is used to gather information about the young person and then how that information is given out. We've received bits and pieces but it's in a fragmented form.

Secretary Ranji stated at the next meeting we will have presentation between YRS and DMSS, which is where Education Unit is housed. They can talk about the current transition process and then we can talk in greater detail about those issues. Secretary Ranji stated that the Department's education experts are in the Education Unit. For this purpose it's hard to imagine it wouldn't be part of the Education Unit. These are also challenging fiscal times. Mr. Jones said he would like the group to be in a position to say we're advocating on the Department's behalf and understand the issues enough to help the general assembly make an informed decision. He stated he hopes to see the group as more than a Task Force that ends next month and to remain in a position to help advocate. Mr. Muhammasd stated if part of what we're asking is the transition specialist to help with the coordination then there might be interest in housing those individuals in DOE. Instead of going to DOE for information, we've got folks who are already engaged. All roads related to education go back to DOE. Secretary Ranji stated that educational policy is DOE. When talking about information sharing it is between the Education Unit and the district. She

acknowledged she would like to have DOE involved and have one stop shop, but the reality is there are many districts and it seems unrealistic to have DOE pull all of the information and then go to the district. Youth specific information seems like something we have to be able to get from districts. Ms. Schutt stated that could be written into the ideal process. Mr. Sadowski said eSchool is for all districts in Delaware. Secretary Ranji stated everyone could benefit from that, but questioned how big of lift would it be to allow sharing of information. Mr. Jones responded if we are talking about Vision 2020, information sharing has to be part of the conversation. It's very important to the recommendations. He noted Ms. Schaffer has had to go through various systems to get information. Mr. Sadowski said he can bring an eSchool specialist to the meeting to explain the inter workings of the program. The transcript part was something he asked about and they explained a lot about why it won't work. Mr. Thompson stated that the eSchool databases are antiquated. Information can't be transferred electronically. It has to be taken from one system and input into another. Mr. Jones responded that it's similar to healthcare reform. Having those records is helping people potentially become healthier. Information can follow the individual. He questioned why we couldn't have an educational system that provides that same tracking. We are moving toward a system that allows there to be some stability in terms of the information. Ms. Biden said that when she worked in the Education Unit there used to be transition portfolios prepared by students and there was supposed to be copy of student transcripts. They could take portfolio to every meeting. She posed if that could that be part of the process in the absence of information sharing within eSchool. Secretary Ranji stated that may already be the case, but the issue is getting the information that is already there. The issue has to do with getting the records rather than having them readily accessible. Mr. Thompson noted guidance counselors are great at getting the information to build a transcript. When talking

about process, that is one of the first things that needs to happen. There needs to be contact with the district when a student enters the system. Districts need to know where they are in the process so that courses can transition back. It's not just the eSchool question; it's also a process question. Secretary Ranji stated she does feel the Education Unit gets the information; having to go get the information is the challenge. Mr. Thompson responded its not just YRS. There are other kids who are transitioning in and out of the systems. He suggested each district and charter could have a point person for transition/transcripts.

Secretary Ranji referred to question 1.2 on the recommendation document as to whether we should put other supports in place. The other part of the question is what kinds of supports do we put in place while youth are in YRS care. She suggested we could revisit this item in more detail after we hear from YRS about what happens now. At a minimum we'll want to talk about ongoing communication while students are with YRS and also a visit to their school before they leave. Mr. Muhammad stated a huge leverage point is the amount of contact the young person has while in the alternative school setting and with the home school. Schools are able to see students in the journey as they are transforming. It may be a hybrid process where we foster several visits with school personnel coming in. Transitioning out on a hybrid basis is something else to consider and the communication is critical.

Next, the Task Force looked at recommendations related to course and credits records transfer. Question 2.1 asks if we should recommend DSCYF utilize contracts with outside agencies to require them to provide information about how courses align with Delaware. We heard from Ms. Porter at previous meeting that this is an issue. This recommendation would require that we amend residential contracts for juvenile justice or otherwise, where youth are getting educational services, so that they provide whatever information is needed about course

alignment. Secretary Ranji also stated David Domenici had suggested we ask them to do the alignment. Mr. Sadowski agreed and said it should be easier with common core. Mr. Thompson stated schools should be giving recommended schedules to the Education Unit to be clear about what students should be taking. Ms. Schutt asked if the Education Unit could accommodate that. Secretary Ranji stated we need the information. Mr. Schutt stated the young woman who spoke with the Task Force was way behind on credits and may not be able to graduate and that this is an issue. Secretary Ranji referred to the other student we heard from whose school wouldn't take him back. He was going to go to an alternative school but that school didn't have what he needed. We need to make sure we do the best we can for each student's individualized needs.

Ms. Biden stated that two years ago most students in the Education Unit were years behind. She asked if within the Education Unit we trying to cram all of these different classes in to get credits or if there is a focus on remedial reading and foundational skills. She noted that when she was in the Education Unit that a focus on foundational skills is what is missing. You could put a student in geometry but the foundational skills weren't there, especially for reading and writing. She questioned if we are trying to do too much and if we could instead focus on life skills and intensive reading and remedial math to help get youth closer to grade level. Secretary Ranji stated Rod Sutton could be invited back to the next meeting to talk with the group about this. One of his mantras is that the kids have to learn to read. If other programs are literacy-based he will do it. If they are not building literacy skills then the other pieces will be much more challenging. We can ask him the specifics of that question. Rod reiterates every time the importance of basic literacy. Ms. Schutt said that's what she was referring to, and the question is do we make sure they go into a school or an effective learning environment. Mr. Muhammed spoke of the correlation between life expectancy and graduation and noted he is not aware of a



correlation to reading or literacy. There is some value in ensuring that kids are maintaining grades. He stated he would worry about framing a curriculum in remedial and life skills where the dial will move slower. A student may be 19 years old and still a freshman. Ms. Schutt asked if he is saying it is more important to graduate than learn to read. Ms. Biden stated that is why they drop out. Mr. Muhammad responded that it is important they live and there is a link between graduation and life expectancy. They aren't mutually exclusive. Ms. Schutt said William Penn has a large group of students who can't read and are on track toward graduation but she is not sure where they go. Mr. Muhammad said graduation opens the door to some employment. A student could have 6<sup>th</sup> grade reading level and stay in school until they are at a 12<sup>th</sup> grade reading level, but he questioned what are we providing to them. Mr. Sadowski stated that a kid who can't see the light at the end of the tunnel might give up. Ms. Schutt responded there is a turnaround in ownership when students progress on foundational skills. Ms. Biden responded that there are other skills – trades, certifications, and vocational skills. What ends up happening is they can't do the work when they return to the traditional school and then they drop out. Secretary Ranji stated that tech and CTE are being built out in the Education Unit. The reality is we'll have kids that need everything. She noted a student graduated for the first time from Ferris with a diploma from Laurel High School and is planning to start college in the Spring. There are other kids that if we focused on reading for 8 months we still won't have them where they need to be. We also have everything in between, which is why we need options, including CTE and college prep. This highlights the need to be realistic about what we're trying to accomplish and where the kids are going to go when they leave. If a kid is reading on 5<sup>th</sup> grade level and we get him to 7<sup>th</sup>, he may still not do well in 10<sup>th</sup> grade in a traditional school. This gets us to the #4 recommendation, which is how do we build flexibility to have kids do

well. Mr. Smith said the kids coming in are heterogeneous and the challenge faced is that the Education Unit can't customize the package for every student. It won't be one single thing; rather it will be an array to help impact the lives of the youth. He acknowledged he is a fan of literacy and there is data available on the importance of literacy. He agreed about the importance of length of life but also about the quality of life. Mr. Thompson stated that the alternative model in Kent County has a good model for taking lots of students in and meeting unique needs. They do a lot of work with literacy and keeping credits toward graduation. If a student falls too far behind then we don't get them back. He noted what the Task Force is looking for may already exist and it could be a matter of replicating. Referring back to 2.1 on the recommendations document Secretary Ranji said it sounds like the group is in agreement to amend contracts.

The question for 2.2 is should we recommend eSchool be adapted to readily access transcripts. That is an issue that goes beyond the Education Unit. There is a transcript issue, but also an issue of tracking what happens to kids when they leave. This goes back to the discussion about exit codes. Mr. Sadowski stated there would be a withdrawal sheet if a student left a district. Schools look for records requests and they send the hard copy cumulative file to another district when requested. The "005" exit code indicates transfer to another Delaware public school, however there are also codes that indicate transfers to a specific district or charter. Ms. Biden stated it is easy to say a student is going to public school. Secretary Ranji confirmed that if a student leaves and doesn't enroll then there would be no other records. Mr. Sadowski confirmed we would see entry codes if a student enrolled somewhere else. Ms. Schaffer noted that among the cohort of youth we looked at most who had "005," transferred to a Delaware public school, were those leaving from YRS. The Education Unit may not have known where a

student would re-enroll and she referred back to the example provided earlier about the student who took 7 months to get enrolled somewhere. Secretary Ranji said “005” is being used by the Education Unit and districts and students not showing up after they leave. It may be that we don’t know what happened next with the student. With the Education Unit it raises questions about how far the education transition process should be pushed back. Maybe first month in YRS a district could say they want to see how a student does. We could start planning earlier. She noted if we decide it should happen sooner then students can have visits and know where they’re going when they leave. Mr. Sadowski stated that even if a student goes through an alternative placement they would enroll in their home school. Their DELSIS record would be active in their home school and they would have a service line in DELSIS for time in alternative program. Ms. Biden stated traditional schools are not accepting the youth back and so they are going to alternative schools. She would like to see them accepted back and demographic information about where they’re going. Mr. Sadowski stated the districts that contract with Parkway would share the progress they’ve seen with students. Ms. Schutt asked if we saw data that said 97% of students don’t graduate. Secretary Ranji stated we are trying to find outcome data from district run alternative schools. We’ve had the alternative schools in to discuss and it is part of the scope. The YRS transition data provided so far was not specific to alternative programs.

Secretary Ranji stated the eSchool conversation is the transcript-sharing piece. The other part is how YRS and districts can know better where a kid is going. If a youth says they’re going to a public school then we’d know from the probation officer’s notes in FACTS. However it is not tracked in the education system. We need to think how far out that tracking will go for the transition person. There needs to be some period of time for which the student is tracked.

Mr. Sadowski asked if it would be helpful to provide more information about why the transcript piece is so hard. Secretary Ranji stated that if he can verify that it's not possible then that would be helpful. Mr. Sadowski said he will follow up to see if it's not possible or if it is but would require a significant programming change.

Secretary Ranji moved to question 2.3 about whether legislation or a DOE regulation be passed allowing juvenile justice students who have had to transfer out and take courses elsewhere to graduate by meeting state baseline graduation requirements (rather than requirements of their district). Secretary Ranji noted this was already done for kids in foster care. She asked if the Task Force agrees this would be helpful. The Task Force agreed and the fact that we have a model would make that easier.

Secretary Ranji noted that discussions remain about whether the Education Unit should have the authorities of school district. This is something the Department was going to try to pursue legislatively because of loan forgiveness for their teachers. This also ties into a recommendation from David Domenici about easing credit transfer. Ms. Massett stated the Education Unit could authorize its own charter if it was a district. There are two ways to authorize, district or state.

Secretary Ranji stated we would also talk about trying to standardize what criteria can be used in making a determination as to whether a youth is going back to a traditional school or alternative school. This would also include trying to put in place an MOU that establishes responsibilities, roles and meeting requirements. The last part is should we be looking at a completely different school model, something along the line of SEED, ROADS or Maya Angelou. One issue we will have to tackle or recommend tackling later is would it be strictly for youth coming out of the juvenile justice system. She noted Mr. Domenici suggested if we pursue this that it is not only for juvenile justice involved youth. It should be for kids who may attend

for a variety of reasons.

**4. Next Steps**

At the next meeting the Task Force will continue to discuss recommendations for its final report. We will also hear from YRS and Education Unit staff on processes in place.

**5. Public Comment**

**6. Adjournment**